



Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

The 37,487-acre Molalla River/Table Rock Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) is located southeast of the city of Molalla, Oregon in the western Cascade Mountains. It includes 27,405 acres of public land. The Salem District, Bureau of Land Management has undertaken a planning effort in order to establish an effective management strategy for recreation resources within the SRMA.

A March 1992 land exchange between the BLM and the Cavanham Forest Industries division of Hansen Industries brought 11 miles of Molalla River frontage totaling 5013 acres into public ownership. A considerable amount of recreational use and public use including dumping, vandalism and long-term occupancy on private land precipitated the exchange. In the transaction, the BLM exchanged six scattered parcels of timberland amounting to 858 acres. The exchange, combined with existing BLM holdings including the Table Rock Wilderness, made the BLM the primary recreational provider along the upper reaches of the Molalla River.

Recreation-related management actions since the exchange have included designation of dispersed campsites, regular administrative and law enforcement presence, trail and trailhead construction, installation of sanitary facilities and the provision of public information. However, these actions have been undertaken without a long-term and comprehensive plan in place.

Table 1: Scope of this planning effort	
Within the scope of this plan:	Outside the scope of this plan:
Describe a proposed comprehensive recreation management strategy for the Molalla River Recreation Corridor and Table Rock Wilderness	Provide management direction for resources other than recreation such as timber, wildlife and fisheries
Outline plans for managing overnight use	Modify land use allocations that guide timber management activities
Recommend a Special Recreation Management Area boundary to be included in the next land use planning effort	Make adjustments to land tenure or initiate any realty actions
Propose a recreation “niche” for the SRMA	Establish new fees without a public process
Explain what changes will be made to the trail systems in the planning area	Establish new regulations without being posted in the Federal Register

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared by the Salem District to present and analyze a range of potential management strategies for BLM-administered lands within the Molalla River/Table Rock SRMA. An EA is a public document that provides a tool for decision making by describing reasonable alternatives and considering their possible effects.

This EA will outline four alternative strategies and document the potential impacts of trail construction and site development projects. These projects will require some level of additional environmental documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

This document also contains, as an appendix, an update to the recreation components contained in the Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan that was completed in 1987.

The Recreation Area Management Plan will provide direction only for the management of recreation use and resources within the planning area. It will *not*: prioritize projects for resources other than recreation; establish new recreation-related fees; establish or modify land use allocations which guide timber management activities; make modifications to land tenure; or establish on its own any new regulations. Many of these management decisions are made through the land use planning process and outlined in a Resource Management Plan.

The release of this EA marks the beginning of a formal 30-day comment period. Stakeholders and members of the general public are encouraged to provide feedback regarding the management alternatives during this period. Taking these comments into account, the BLM will formulate and release a final Recreation Area Management Plan. It will be accompanied by a Decision Record that outlines the rationale for the decision, as well as an implementation schedule that identifies the proposed timing of specific projects.

1.1 Description and Map of Planning Area

The headwaters of the Molalla River begin nearly 4,900 feet above sea level on the western slopes of the Cascade Mountains near Table Rock. The river flows undammed roughly 49 miles west and north to join the Willamette River near Canby. The planning area includes 27,405 acres of BLM-administered land and 10,082 acres of private land within the Upper Molalla Watershed (see Figure 1). Situated between the Clackamas River to the north and the North Fork of the Santiam River to the south, the Upper Molalla watershed exhibits traits typical of the western Cascades including dense coniferous forests, heavy precipitation and volcanic-origin geology. Elevations range from 4881 feet at the top of Table Rock to 800 feet along the Molalla River.



The planning area was identified as a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) by the 1995 Salem District Resource Management Plan in recognition of area's value as a recreation resource. SRMA's are geographic areas where the BLM provides an increased level of management attention as compared with Extensive Recreation Management Areas. The designation is administrative only and is meant to identify areas where staff time should be spent and investments in recreation should be focused.

The proposed SRMA boundary identified in this document (Figure 1) is more extensive than that found in the 1995 RMP. It more accurately reflects the extent of where BLM expends its resources to manage recreation use. Delineation of the new SRMA boundary constitutes a recommendation that it be recognized in the next land use planning process.

The Molalla River-Table Rock Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities including dispersed camping, picnicking, swimming, angling, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, day-hiking, non-motorized boating and recreational shooting all within an hour's drive of the Portland and Salem metropolitan areas. Over 90% of visitors to the planning area come from these metropolitan centers or elsewhere in the Willamette Valley. Few rivers in the state offer such ease of access to varied recreation opportunities so close to major urban areas.

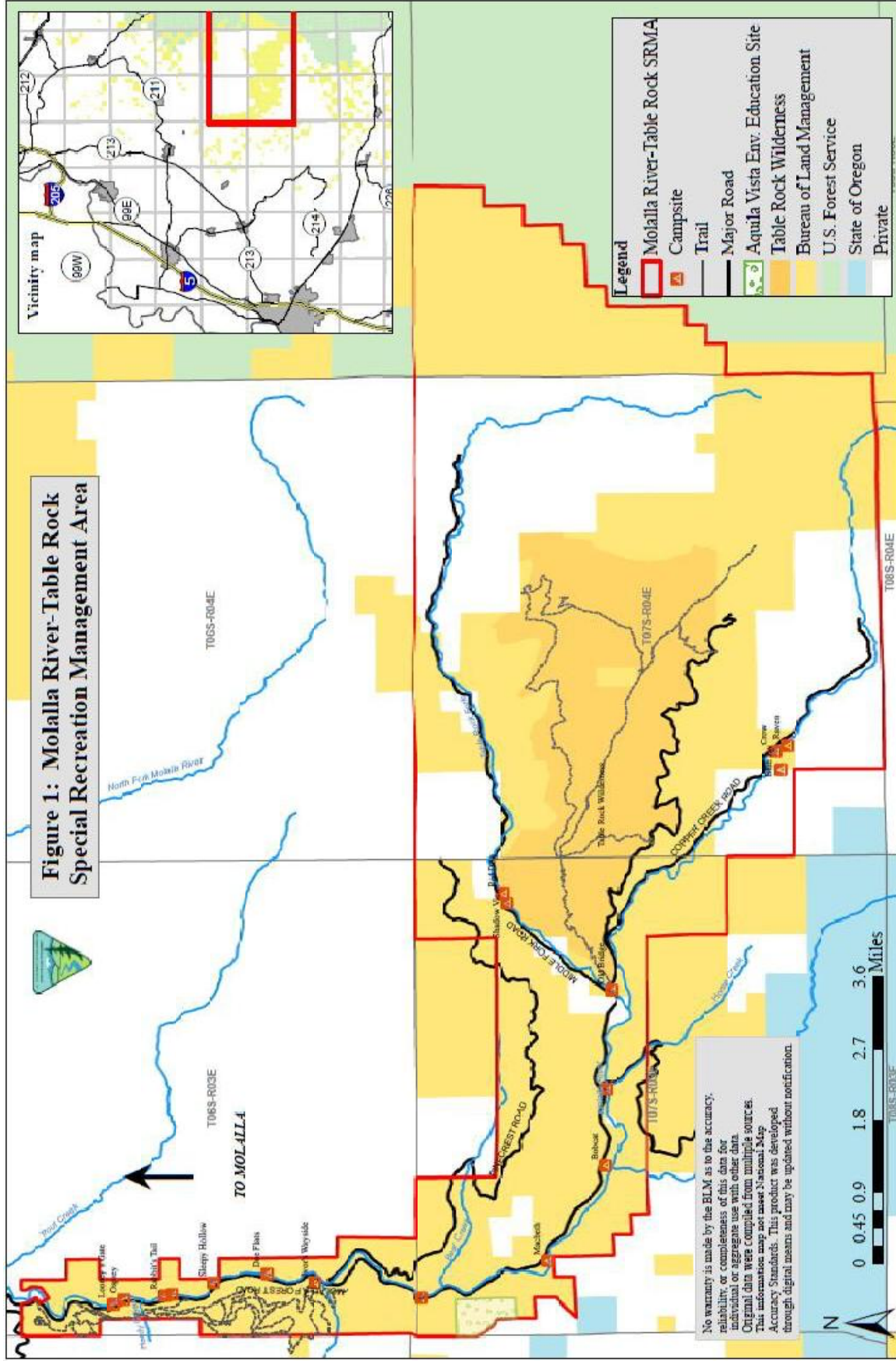
Much of the area is accessible via paved or improved gravel roads originating from the west. The area's main access route, the South Molalla Forest Road, accounts for a large majority of administrative and recreational visits. Roads within the recreation area are also heavily used for the transport of timber and other forest products.

Current recreation use is primarily unstructured and dispersed in nature with limited facility development. Overnight camping is limited to 16 dispersed, designated campsites. These sites are minimally defined and provide few, if any, amenities. Day use is largely unregulated and spread over 50 informal pullouts located along major roads. These pullouts access swimming or fishing locations, picnic spots, recreational shooting sites or other dispersed recreation sites and have only minimal signage. Three vault restrooms are located along the most popular 10-mile stretch of the Molalla River (referred to as the Molalla River Recreation Corridor).

Trail-based recreation is provided for within the Molalla River and Table Rock Wilderness trail systems. The Molalla River Shared-Use system, accessible from 5 trailheads along the S. Molalla Forest Road, contains nearly 25 miles combining closed forest roads with singletrack trail and is open to hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. The 20-mile wilderness trail system, accessible from 5 trailheads along secondary access routes, traverses the high ridges of Table Rock Wilderness. It is open to non-mechanized travel (hikers and equestrians only).

Aquila Vista Environmental Education Site is also located within the planning area. The site is utilized by classes from local school districts, youth conservation groups and other organizations. A small system of trails, bridges and boardwalks provides access to this unique wetland ecosystem.

In the 1995 Salem District Resource Management Plan (RMP), a 13.2 mile segment of the mainstem Molalla River was found 'suitable' by the BLM for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic River System in recognition of its outstanding recreational, scenic and geologic values. In addition, a 13.4 mile section of the Table Rock Fork of the Molalla was found 'eligible' for inclusion to protect its cultural values. The BLM is required to provide interim protection for these river segments until they are designated or released from consideration.



1.2 Purpose and Need

The BLM-administered Molalla River-Table Rock Special Recreation Management Area provides important recreational opportunities for northwest Oregon residents. Readily accessible by a large proportion of the state's population, the area has seen a steady growth in visitation over the past two decades. This use has resulted in impacts to resources and concerns over public safety that necessitates establishing an appropriate management strategy.

Unregulated recreation use along the river and its riparian areas has resulted in impacts to the area's natural resources. This includes loss of ground cover and riparian vegetation, soil compaction and riverbank erosion. These impacts not only pose a threat to ecological resources but also degrade the setting needed for high quality recreation.

The nature of use within the planning area has also created conditions that pose a threat to public safety and undermine the quality of the visitor experience. Dumping, vandalism, reckless shooting, long-term occupancy, vehicular accidents and theft take place within the SRMA.

Current actions to address these issues are taking place without a long-term and comprehensive plan in place. The purpose of the proposed action is to establish a framework that will determine how recreation opportunities are provided for and managed within the Molalla River/Table Rock Special Recreation Management Area for the next 15 years. This includes BLM strategies to:

- Manage recreation use in a manner that prevents resource degradation and contributes to the long-term health of lands within the recreation area
- Manage public lands for recreation experience and improved quality of life under the Benefits Based Management framework
- Provide diverse, high quality recreation opportunities that contribute to meeting demand for recreation
- Resolve identified issues associated with public safety
- Establish an adaptive structure that will allow the BLM to adjust to new conditions and trends
- Comply with relevant agency goals and directives including those found in the 1995 Salem District Resource Management Plan
- Identify specific actions the BLM would take to implement these strategies
- Establish a recreation "niche" for the SRMA and effectively market this strategy to capitalize on local travel and tourism-related spending

1.3 Issues and Concerns

A planning issue is defined as a matter of controversy, dispute, or general concern over resource management activities, the environment, or land uses. Listed below are issues that were identified through the internal and external scoping process. The goal of this planning effort is to effectively address these issues through a comprehensive recreation management strategy.

Issue: *Long-term Management and Rural/Wildland Interface*

How will appropriate long term management of the recreation area be accomplished? How will rural/wildland interface issues be addressed? How will public safety be improved?

Pressures from growing regional population centers continue to increase the potential for urban interface issues. These pressures translate into dumping of household or commercial garbage, vandalism and theft of personal and public property and occupancy beyond the legal 14-day overnight stay limit. Reckless driving has resulted in numerous vehicular accidents and several fatalities over the past decade. These activities have been noticeably reduced in the past three to four years in conjunction with a concerted effort to increase law enforcement presence by local, county and federal authorities but remain a matter of concern. Over time, these activities degrade the visitor experience and may prevent some members of the public from visiting the SRMA.

Issue: *Community Contributions*

What 'niche' should the Molalla River-Table Rock SRMA fill in the regional recreation market? How will management of the river enhance its role as a community resource? What possibilities exist for partnerships that can boost appropriate travel and tourism-related activity?

The Molalla River-Table Rock SRMA plays two important roles in the regional recreation and travel market. First, it provides 'backyard' recreation opportunities for area residents and contributes to the local quality of life through easy access to natural settings and varied recreation activities. Second, it serves as a travel destination for visitors from elsewhere in northwest Oregon, particularly the Portland metropolitan area. The recreation opportunities within the SRMA hold potential economic benefits for local communities in the form of travel and tourism-related spending. Appropriate development, marketing and management of the SRMA have the potential to enhance its dual roles as community recreation resource and regional travel destination.

Issue: *Overnight Camping*

How will overnight recreational use of the area be managed? To what degree and in which locations is camping appropriate? Should a developed campground(s) be constructed within the planning area? How will recreation-related impacts to other resources be minimized?

Overnight camping is a popular activity within the recreation area, engaged in by nearly half of all visitors. The Molalla River-Table Rock SRMA provides opportunities for free, dispersed, riverside camping that are uncommon in comparable recreation areas. While popular, this use has the potential to adversely impact river-related resources through soil compaction, riverbank erosion and the presence of human waste. The management of overnight camping has consistently been identified as one of the most pressing issues for this plan to address.



Issue: *River Access*

How will river access be provided under this plan? What amenities or level of development will be provided?

The Molalla River is the primary draw for visitors to the SRMA. A large majority of users report engaging in river-related recreation including swimming, angling, riverside camping or boating. Much of this use has been established based on ease of access rather than the attributes and durability of each location. These sites currently lack infrastructure such as defined parking areas, improved river access points, visitor information and restrooms. The potential exists to identify more appropriate access points and minimize undesirable impacts.

Issue: *Non-Motorized Trails*

What actions will be taken to address demand for non-motorized trail use? How will unsustainable portions of the trail system be addressed? Will the Shared-Use or Wilderness trail systems be enhanced or expanded under this plan? How will potential user conflicts be addressed?

The Molalla River Shared-Use Trail System was developed in the mid 1990's to address demand for new trail opportunities. The system, which included nearly 25 miles of closed forest roads and singletrack trails, has not been greatly altered or expanded since construction was completed. Many portions of the trail system were built unsustainably. Over time, there has been erosion of the trail surface, leading to long term maintenance challenges and shortened seasons of use. The Wilderness Trail System has undergone numerous changes and improvements since the 1987 Management Plan was completed. However, several weak links still exist that warrant management attention.

1.4 Decision To Be Made

The BLM will identify which strategies are most appropriate for managing recreation resources and human use within the Molalla River/Table Rock SRMA. This includes:

- What type of overnight activity will be allowed within the planning area
- If overnight use is allowed, what type of facilities will be provided to accommodate it
- What type of day use opportunities will be offered and at which locations
- What facilities will be developed for day use and river access
- To what extent the Shared Use Trail System will be modified or enhanced, including construction of new trails
- What types of visitor information or services will be provided and in what locations
- What interpretive materials will be developed
- What restrictions will be placed on certain recreation activities
- Whether a system of recreation fees will be pursued

1.5 Planning Process

This plan was produced through a collaborative process with a variety of stakeholders including local government entities, elected officials, non-profit organizations, user groups, interested members of the public and BLM personnel. Input has been received in a continuous and iterative manner with numerous opportunities for comment.

The planning process for the Molalla River-Table Rock plan has been ongoing since a scoping meeting was held October 7, 2008. Held at the Molalla Public Library, the meeting provided a three hour open house forum for members of the public to explain their interests and concerns regarding management of BLM lands in the Upper Molalla Watershed. This meeting contributed to setting the scope of the plan and identified issues and concerns to be addressed.

Following the initial scoping meeting, a BLM website (http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/salem/plans/molalla_index.php) was established to disperse plan-related information and provide background for interested parties.

The planning process has also been included in the Salem District's quarterly Project Update publication since 2007. The publication provides information regarding BLM's current project work and provides contact information for public involvement.

Throughout 2009 BLM staff gathered additional resource information, completed a Pre-Plan Analysis and compiled preliminary management alternatives. BLM staff participated in a series of tours, meeting and focus groups to solicit stakeholder input:

- *March 2009:* Meeting of the Molalla River Alliance to present the Pre-Plan Analysis and provide an opportunity for comment
- *April 2009:* Tour of the Molalla River with members of Representative Kurt Schraeder's office
- *May 2009:* Tour with members of Molalla RiverWatch and Todos Juntos
- *June 2009:* Tour with members of various non-profit groups and local stakeholders
- *September 2009:* Tour in conjunction with a visit from Representative Kurt Schraeder
- *October 2009:* Presentation at Molalla River Alliance meeting of preliminary management alternatives
- *November 2009:* Focus group with local business and community leaders to discuss the recreation area's role in the regional travel and tourism sector
- *December 2009:* meeting with members of the Molalla RiverWatch to discuss management alternatives
- *April 2010:* Presentation to the Hamlet of Molalla Prairie to discuss potential management actions and opportunities for public comment

A BLM Interdisciplinary Team (see Interdisciplinary Team of Preparers on page 5) was convened during the planning process. Its role was to help refine goals and objectives, analyze the area's resource, predict the potential impacts of the management alternatives and produce planning documents.

1.6 Benefits-Based Management

In 2006, the Bureau of Land Management formally adopted a new approach for providing and managing recreation opportunities on public lands: Benefits-Based Management (BBM). This decision marked a shift in thinking away from simply providing recreation activities and the facilities that go along with them.

Instead, it requires public land managers to consider the broader picture of why people engage in recreation, what types of outcomes result from that participation and what recreation providers can do to help produce high quality experiences.

The central question posed under this framework is: Why should recreation opportunities and services be provided? Answering this question goes beyond stating that someone enjoys hiking in a natural setting or picnicking with their family. Under BBM, the question is answered by identifying the particular outcomes and benefits that result from participation in outdoor recreation. These include:

- Benefits to *individuals* such as improved mental well-being and an enhanced sense of personal freedom
- Benefits to *households and communities* such as improved group cooperation and an enhanced sense of place
- Benefits to the *economy* such as increased tax revenues from visitors and increased property values
- Benefits to the *environment* such as improved awareness and protection of natural process

Working under the BBM framework requires identifying which benefits are most suitable for the area and most valued by the stakeholders involved. All management actions, therefore, should be geared towards providing as many of these benefits as possible in the context of other public land resources.

BBM also requires taking a regional perspective and identifying how the Molalla River-Table Rock SRMA relates to other nearby recreation opportunities. This concept is referred to as a ‘niche’, the recognition of what role a given recreation area should play in the regional market and what benefits managers should try to provide within that area.

Principles associated with the BBM model play a large role in planning for and managing the Molalla River-Table Rock SRMA. The final plan will articulate the activities, experiences and benefits targeted within the recreation area. Some BBM terminology (i.e. niche, outcomes, etc) will be utilized in this document in attempt to illustrate the differences in alternatives.

1.7 Land Classification

This section describes the land classifications present within the planning area including land use allocations, potential additions to the National Wild and Scenic River System and a lease under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act.

The planning area is defined by the boundaries of the Molalla River-Table Rock Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). An SRMA is an umbrella designation for a geographic area where additional resources (labor, funds, etc) are spent to manage recreational use. SRMA’s overlay land use allocations and Congressional designations and provide direction for recreation management only.

All BLM public lands not contained within an SRMA are classified as an Extensive Recreation Management Area, or ERMA. An ERMA is an area where recreational use is likely to occur, but at lower levels that do not require specific, focused management attention.

1.7.1 BLM Land Use Allocations

Land use allocations are designations that determine what land management actions are appropriate in a given area. They are established during district-level land use planning processes such as the Salem District Resource Management Plan (RMP). Land use allocations guide all resource management actions including timber, wildlife and fisheries.

Under the 1995 Salem District RMP the BLM adheres to Northwest Forest Plan Land Use Allocations. Below is a table and description that summarizes the Management Objectives for the major land use allocations in the Salem District RMP. Classification that overlay land use allocations (Riparian Reserves, potential Wild and Scenic Rivers) are also described.

There are three land use allocations within the planning area boundary: General Forest Management Area (GFMA), Congressional Reserve (Table Rock Wilderness), and Late Successional Reserve (LSR). Of these three allocations, approximately 21% (5,702 acres) of the proposed planning area is within the wilderness with 32% in GFMA (8,895 acres) and 47% in the LSR (12,808 acres).

Table 2: BLM Land Use Allocations	
<i>Land Use Allocation</i>	<i>Acres</i>
Matrix	8,895
General Forest Management Area	8,895
Connectivity	0
Late Successional Reserve	12,808
Congressional Reserve (Table Rock Wilderness)	5,702
TOTAL BLM OWNERSHIP	27,405
Non-Federal Lands	10,082
TOTAL ACREAGE	37,487

Matrix: Matrix lands include both General Forest Management Area and Connectivity lands. Only General Forest Management Area lands are present in the planning area:

General Forest Management Area (GFMA): Management objectives for GFMA lands include producing a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities while providing habitat for a variety of organisms, providing important ecosystem functions, and providing early seral habitat (RMP p. 20). The BLM manages **8,895** acres of GFMA within the planning area.

Late-Successional Reserve: Late-Successional Reserves protect and enhance conditions of late-successional and old growth forest-related species.

1.7.2 Table Rock Wilderness

The entirety of 5,702-acre Table Rock Wilderness is contained within the planning area. Table Rock Wilderness was designated as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System by the Oregon Wilderness Act of 1984 (PL 98-328). It remains the only BLM-managed Wilderness within the boundaries of the Salem District. Management direction for the Wilderness is found in the Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan, completed in 1987. This planning effort updates the recreation-related components of the plan in Appendix A, Table Rock Wilderness Management Plan Update.

1.7.3 Wild and Scenic Rivers

Wild and Scenic Rivers – Molalla River Segment B

A 13.2 mile section of the mainstem Molalla was found ‘suitable’ for inclusion into the National System. A ‘suitable’ finding is made only after a detailed assessment by the BLM and constitutes a recommendation that the river be designated under the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

The segment, referred to as Molalla River Segment B, extends from the confluence of the mainstem Molalla with the Table Rock Fork of the Molalla River downstream to Glen Avon Bridge. It includes 2,988 acres of BLM-administered lands with on both sides of the river, most of which were brought into public ownership through the exchange described previously.

Molalla River Segment B has been given a preliminary classification of **Recreational**. This indicates the river is readily accessible by road, has some shoreline development and may have undergone some impoundment or diversion. Outstandingly Remarkable Values were identified as **Scenery, Recreation and Geology**. A Resource Assessment for this segment was completed during the land use planning process and contained an analysis of the river’s suitability for WSR designation (it is available for review at the Salem District Office).

The following descriptions of the Outstandingly Remarkable Values are summarized from the 1992 Resource Assessment:

Scenery: Wide range of colors and textures. The river’s character ranges from deep clear pools to riffles and cascading whitewater. Many rock outcrops and cliffs descend directly into the river. Human influences detract slightly from the view in many areas, but the overall impact is not



significant.

Recreation: Opportunities include day hiking, fishing, dispersed camping and whitewater boating. The area attracts visitors originating from within and outside the area. Ease of access and diverse opportunities add to the value of this river corridor.

Geology: Geological value of this segment is considered unique and rare in the region. A series of horizontal columnar basalt rosettes occur near the middle of the segment. This feature is especially unusual because it has been exposed by erosion processes of the river itself.

Wild and Scenic Rivers- Table Rock Fork

A 13.4 mile section of the Table Rock Fork of the Molalla River was found 'eligible' for inclusion into the National System. The segment extends from its headwaters downstream to its confluence with the mainstem Molalla River. It includes 1,385 acres of BLM administered land which are a mix of Public Domain and O&C lands. Some of this acreage already falls within the boundaries of the Table Rock Wilderness.

The Table Rock Fork was given a preliminary classification of **Recreational** during the eligibility determination process. Outstandingly Remarkable Values were identified as **Cultural**.

The following descriptions are summarized from the 1990 Eligibility Assessment:

Cultural: There is a high site density within this river corridor; five cultural sites are currently recorded. A National Register of Historic Places eligibility has not been completed.

Within the Salem District, only river segments with 40% public ownership or more within the preliminary river corridor were evaluated for suitability during the 1995 RMP effort. The Table Rock Fork fell below this threshold, and as a result, was not evaluated for suitability.

Interim Management of Suitable and Eligible Wild and Scenic Rivers

Until such time as these river segments are designated under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act or released from consideration, the BLM is required to provide interim protection of the river's free flowing characteristics and potential Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

1.7.4 Other Land Classifications

Recreation and Public Purposes (R&PP) Lease

Roughly 4,442 acres within the Molalla River-Table Rock SRMA are under a Recreation and Public Purposes lease to Clackamas County. The lease was entered into by the county and the BLM on January 6th, 1995 and is set to expire in January 2020. The Recreation and Public Purposes Act of 1956 authorizes the sale or lease of public lands for recreational or public

purposes to State and local governments and qualified non-profits. The lease was put in place to facilitate potential cooperative recreation development and management projects.

1.8 Conformance with Land Use Plan, Statutes, Regulations, and other Plans

Management actions identified in this plan will be designed to conform to the following documents, which direct and provide the legal framework for management of BLM lands within the Salem District:

- *Salem District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*, May 1995 (RMP)
- *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, April 1994 (the Northwest Forest Plan, or NWFP).
- *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines*, January 2001.

1.8.1 Related Plans and Reports

The following reports provided important background information for producing this draft plan:

- *Resource Assessment of the Molalla River* (1993) Analyzes the suitability of the mainstem Molalla River for inclusion into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.
- *Molalla River Watershed Analysis* (1999) Presents a watershed-level perspective on the physical, social and environmental conditions and trends within the watershed.

The above documents are available for review in the Salem District Office. For a full overview of plan conformance, consultation and supplemental authorities associated with this document, see Chapter 5.

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Chapter 2

ALTERNATIVES



Chapter 2: Alternatives

Chapter 2 describes overall management goals and objectives and describes each of the four alternatives.

2.1 Management Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives are common to all four management alternatives.

Table 3: Management Goals and Objectives	
Management Goals	
Manage the Molalla River-Table Rock SRMA for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations	
Manage recreation use in a manner that mitigates impacts on the ecological integrity of the planning area	
Administer the SRMA consistent with its identified ‘niche’ in order to maximize community and economic benefits	
Adaptively manage the SRMA to enhance the area’s recreational opportunities and unique characteristics while recognizing that increased future use will trigger the need for increased levels of management	
Management Objectives	
Ensure natural resource protection by providing complimentary public access and minimizing recreation-related impacts	Provide a broad range of recreation experiences and associated benefits within the Benefits-Based Management framework
Engage in collaborative land management by working in partnership with private and public entities including local governments, non-profit organizations and recreational user groups	Protect public safety by limiting the occurrence of vehicular accidents, theft and vandalism
Supply recreation opportunities in a manner that satisfies existing and expected demand	Protect the area’s value as a recreation setting by maintaining and enhancing its scenic values
Utilize public information to effectively communicate rules, regulations and relevant natural and human history	Develop a management strategy that is reasonable, cost-effective and implementable

2.2 Alternatives Summary

Four alternatives were developed in response to the purpose and need. These alternatives include the no action alternative (Alternative A) and three action alternatives (Alternatives B, C, D). Each alternative is described in this section and analyzed in Chapter 4.

Each of the alternatives represents a different strategy for addressing the issues outlined in section 1.3. Resources to implement this plan will be finite. The alternatives were developed to reflect that emphasis on one activity or theme (i.e. new trails) will result in fewer resources available for others (i.e. developed camping). The question is not what actions should be taken to fix the identified issues, but rather what actions can be taken given what is available.

Implementation of any of the alternatives is dependent on the availability of funds, staff time and other resources. Any facility, trail and amenity development will be completed in a manner that minimizes long-term operations and maintenance costs.

Alternative A-Continuation of Existing Management (No Action Alternative), proposes continuing current management practices. No large-scale site development or alteration would occur. Designated, dispersed camping areas would remain and be managed under current rules and regulations. Day use and river access would continue at their present locations, with action taken only to address the most severe resource concerns. No new trails would be constructed and trailhead access would remain as is.

Alternative B-Primitive Camping Emphasis (PROPOSED ACTION) proposes concentrating overnight and day use to locations that minimize natural resource impacts. Camping would be limited to three minimally developed campgrounds, each consisting of 6 to 10 sites with no water or electrical facilities. Two existing campsites would be closed and enhanced for day use. Some day use sites would be closed but most would remain available. An overhaul of the Molalla Trails System would close or re-route unsustainable portions of the trail system and up to 5 miles of new trail would be constructed with a focus on providing user-specific opportunities. Visitor information development would include a small interpretive program and production of a water trail guide. A river restoration program would be implemented at closed campsites and day use locations, totaling up to 20 locations.

Alternative C-Centralized Camping Emphasis proposes the construction of one developed campground that can accommodate 24 to 36 units. Camping would be prohibited outside this location. A day use-only area providing river access would be provided adjacent to the campground. One other location would be improved and open to day use only. A riverside trail would be developed adjacent to the campground. A major overhaul of the Shared Use Trail System would not be completed. Visitor information improvements would include a volunteer host stationed within the recreation area. A river restoration program would be implemented at up to 25 locations.

Alternative D-Day Use Emphasis proposes closing all existing campsites and prohibiting camping within the main recreational corridor to protect the river's natural resources. Three developed day use sites would be constructed, providing improved river access. One of these sites would function as a visitor portal, welcoming visitors to the recreation area. Two to three miles of new trail would be constructed along the river south of Turner Bridge.

A comprehensive interpretation and visitor information plan would be implemented to enhance the day use experience. An aggressive river restoration program would be implemented at up to 35 locations.

2.3 Description of Alternatives

Each alternative varies based what ‘recreation niche’ the planning area will serve-

Recreation Niche Statement: Describes the ‘recreation niche’ the Molalla River-Table Rock SRMA fills in the regional recreation market. Answers the question: what will the area be known for under the alternative?

Intent: Summarizes the reasoning behind the recreation niche and describes the priorities in managing the area. Describes which visitors are targeted and what activities are provided.

Each alternative also varies by four management themes-

- **Overnight Use:** Includes all components of overnight use within the SRMA such as rules and regulations, facilities, management strategies and appropriate locations.
- **Day Use and River Access:** Includes the rules, facilities and strategies that concern non-overnight activities including swimming, picnicking, recreational mining, boating and fishing.
- **Trail Access and Development:** Covers the 24.6 mile Shared-Use Trail System and associated trailheads as well as potential riverside trails. Identification of appropriate trailhead and trail locations.
- **Visitor Services and Information:** All the public information related to the SRMA including administrative presence, information kiosks, interpretative materials, wayfinding signage, brochures and websites.

Management direction related to travel and transportation, recreational mining, charging of fees, Aquila Vista Environmental Education Site, and permitting of commercial activities applies to all of the action alternatives (B, C and D) and can be found in section 2.5 *Common to All Action Alternatives*. This section also contains project design features.

2.3.1 Alternative A: Continuation of Existing Management

Recreation Niche Statement: The Molalla River-Table Rock recreation area provides a wide variety of dispersed, free and unstructured recreation opportunities along a forested river corridor. Easy river access and minimal facility development allow for a self-directed experience.

Intent: Provide for a ‘do-it-yourself’ recreation experience with management actions taken to address the most severe resource concerns. Provide little to no infrastructure development and minimize long term operations and maintenance costs. Prevent visitor use in undesirable or sensitive locations through gating or blocking vehicle access. Draw visitors from the population centers and outlying rural communities. Options for a wide range of activities include swimming, camping, recreational shooting, fishing, non-motorized trail use and boating.

Overnight Use: Overnight use limited to 16 dispersed, designated campsites located along S. Molalla Forest Road, Table Rock Road and Copper Creek Road. Camping is prohibited outside these locations. The majority are located in the main recreational corridor between Amanda's Trailhead and Turner Bridge. Campsites currently in use remain open and existing rules continue to apply. Depending on the location, each site has parking for 2 to 8 vehicles, with an average of 4.

Estimated total capacity (assuming 4 vehicles/site, 2.5 individuals/vehicle): *160 overnight users*

Each site provides a minimum level of amenities:

- Metal fire ring
- Posted signage outlining rules and regulations
- Minimally defined parking
- No restrooms or trash service

No fee is charged for use of these sites and no formal registration process is applied. No regulations specific to the SRMA are in place. Relevant existing regulations include the 14-day overnight stay limit and others related to public use and occupancy that apply to all public lands in Oregon and Washington.

Sites were chosen for designation from the numerous informal camping locations established prior to BLM's management of the area. The primary criterion for designation was each site's location between major roads and the river in order to prevent the potential spread of fire. Many of these sites are located at premium river access points, and their long term use by campers prevents access by other visitors.

The sites themselves are not defined, although vehicle access is restricted through the use of physical barriers. Users are asked to utilize vault restrooms in the vicinity or practice Leave No Trace principles including burying human waste and packing out all trash.

Day Use and River Access: Day use spread over 50+ informal sites, most of which are pullouts along major roadways. Most popular day use locations provide river access for swimming and angling, while others are utilized for picnicking or recreational shooting. Each access point is user-created, and trails to the river are characterized by poor alignment leading to soil erosion and loss of riparian vegetation.

Vehicle access to many of these sites is restricted with physical barriers. Additional management action is taken only to address the most severe resource concerns.

Trails and Trailhead Access: Continue regular maintenance on the existing 24.6 mile Shared-Use Trail System, accessed from 5 trailheads (Amanda's, Americorps, Sandquist, Hardy Creek, Yellow Gate). An additional trailhead, Quarry, is not presently maintained. Continue to combine paid youth crew labor with volunteer assistance to complete priority work. Regular annual maintenance including brushing, grubbing, removal of fallen trees and tread repair would continue as agency funding is available.

Use of the system would continue to be limited to non-motorized users including hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. Trails are named, assigned a level of difficulty and open to all users.

While there is no formal zoning by use (i.e. equestrians confined to particular trails) the nature of the trails and trailhead access has the natural effect of segmenting users. Equestrian access is effectively limited to Hardy Creek and Yellow Gate trailheads due to constraints with trailer and vehicle size.

All singletrack trails remain closed to bikers and equestrians during the late fall, winter and early spring to prevent excessive trail damage. This period typically last from mid-October to mid-April; the closure is posted at each trailhead. During the closure, forest road trails (roughly half of the total mileage) remain open to all users.

Visitor Services and Information: Maintain and replace existing information and wayfinding signage. No interpretive materials are presented.

Signage includes:

- Rules/regulations signage at each designated campsite and most day use locations
- Large entrance sign on S. Molalla Forest Road at the beginning of BLM-administered lands (Amanda's TH)
- Large sign outlining major rules and regulations (Americorps TH)
- 3 metal information kiosks with maps, activity suggestions and rules/regulations (Americorps TH, Ivor's Wayside, Turner Bridge)
- Wooden single-panel kiosks at trailhead locations
- Large wooden 3-panel kiosk at Hardy Creek
- Road safety signage including speed limits and trail user crossings
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife fishing regulations

During the high use season (typically late May to late September), each site is patrolled and cleaned by BLM staff based at Wildwood Recreation Site and volunteer hosts based at the BLM Molalla Maintenance Shop. Contact with campers is made where possible and trash is removed. Administrative presence is provided, on average, between 6 and 7 days per week during the high use season.

Law enforcement is provided through a cooperative effort between BLM, Clackamas County and the City of Molalla. Enforcement efforts target vehicle infractions, underage drinking and long-term occupancy.

Bi-annual clean-ups, special events, and trail work parties are held in partnership with local and state non-profit groups. BLM also participates in and provides funding for the Dumpstoppers program (operated by Clackamas County), aimed at preventing and prosecuting dumping on public lands.

2.3.2 Alternative B: Primitive Camping Emphasis (Proposed Action)

Recreation Niche Statement: The Molalla River-Table Rock recreation area provides diverse opportunities for river-based activities and minimally-developed camping along a forested river corridor. Rustic facilities and easy river access allow for a relatively primitive recreation experience close to rural communities and urban population centers.

Intent: Provide for a high quality visitor experience while minimizing resource impacts.

Strategically place amenities to control visitor use and mitigate impacts to sensitive resources, focusing on previously impacted areas. Minimize infrastructure development and long term operations and maintenance costs while adequately managing for increased visitor use. Maintain one of the primary attractions to the area and preserve existing visitor base by providing opportunities for primitive, riverside camping. Provide a mix of trail opportunities that are catered to specific users. Options for a wide range of activities include swimming, camping, fishing, non-motorized trail use and boating.

Overnight Use: Camping restricted to three small developed campgrounds, each with 8 to 10 units totaling no less than 24 sites. Campsites provide walk-in sites for tent camping in a primitive, riverside setting. Campgrounds would be located at the current locations of Rabbits Tail and Sleepy Hollow campsites and the Pine Creek bridge gravel stockpile. Identify Macbeth campsite as a location for potential development.

Estimated total capacity (assuming 2 vehicles per site, 2.5 individuals per vehicle): *up to 130 overnight users*

Amenities provided include:

- Metal fire ring
- Designated and defined parking for each site
- Overflow parking
- Varying campsite capacities to accommodate different group sizes
- Improved trails and river access
- Information and registration board
- Trash service
- Defined site with tent pad
- Vault restroom for each campground
- BBQ grills

Table 4 Alternative B (Proposed Action) Campground Development			
Campground Name	# of Sites	Opportunities Offered	Estimated Acreage
Rabbits Tail	8; parking for 16 vehicles	Central parking area directly off of Molalla Forest Road - Walk in tent camping, with two larger group sites near parking area - connections to Hardy Creek Trailhead and riverside trail	7
Sleepy Hollow	8; parking for 14 vehicles	Walk-in tent camping with improved river access points; most sites (up to 6) are located in the cedar grove south of parking area	5
Pine Creek Bridge	Up to 10	Current location of gravel stockpile. Pull through site with back-in parking for tent camping and small RV's (less than 30')	6
Macbeth (potential)	6 to 8; pull-through parking for 12 vehicles	Identify as a potential development site during 15 year plan; gravel would be re-located and half the site restored; rest of site could accommodate small RV's	6

**Molalla River - Table Rock
Recreation Area Management Plan**
"Alternative B - Proposed Walk-in Camping Development Concept"



The proposed camping development concept allows visitors a natural, primitive camping experience while protecting the locations' riparian resources. Walk-in access to defined riverside campsites is complemented by a central restroom and trash facilities.



A photograph of a large tree trunk with a thick, textured bark, surrounded by dense green foliage and ferns in a forest setting.

PHILIPPA WALKER AND ANTHONY J. AUBREY

Users are charged a moderate Expanded Amenity Fee (in the range of \$6 to \$10 per night). Users arrive, register, and orient themselves at the central information panel. Sites are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. As conditions dictate, reservation systems for individual campgrounds would be considered. Rules including length of stay, quiet hours and group size are developed and clearly communicated.

Levels of amenities, development and administrative presence vary between the three campgrounds, catering to a wide variety of preferences. At least one campground provides parking for small Recreational Vehicles (30' and under). Within each campground, sites would be widely distributed and accessible via a network of trails to provide a level of privacy and feeling of remoteness.

Sites patrolled and cleaned by BLM staff and volunteer hosts. Hosts would remain stationed at the Molalla Maintenance Shop.

As conditions and use levels dictate, evaluate potential development at Macbeth location. This decision would be made within an adaptable framework that establishes standards and indicators for visitor satisfaction, occupancy rates and other factors.

Day Use and River Access: Majority of dispersed day use locations remain open. Those with severe resource concerns (riparian area damage, vehicle trespass, etc) would be closed and rehabilitated. Developed day use locations created at Looney's Gate and Ivor Davies. Amenities at these locations include:

- Improved and defined parking
- Trash service
- Information kiosks
- Additional vault restrooms
- Improved and hardened trails for river access

Development at these locations focuses on concentrating use in most appropriate areas (i.e. those with low resource concerns) and providing infrastructure (fencing, trail improvements, etc) that facilitate low impact river access. Utilize physical barriers to minimize or prevent vehicle access to sensitive locations.

Enhance the current location of Old Bridge campsite to provide improved river access for whitewater boaters. Improvements include defined parking and visitor information.

Trails and Trailhead Access: Complete an overhaul of the Shared Use Trail System that fixes and/or re-routes unsustainable portions. Create equestrian and mountain bike emphasis areas in the South End and North End trails, respectively.

In the Loop Trail portion of the Shared Use Trail System, fix and/or re-route unsustainable trail segments. Harden up to 3 miles of singletrack trails for year-round use including Fern Creek Trail. Increase the capacity of Hardy Creek TH.

Close portions of the North End trail system and develop new mountain-bike specific trails including technical trail features, bermed corners and designed grade reversals. Improve Americorps trailhead and promote as primary access to North End trails.

Between current southern extent of the trail system and Aquila Vista, construct a shared-use singletrack connection of up to 3 miles that allows for longer loops utilizing Huckleberry Trail.

Use of the system limited to non-motorized users including hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. Provide these recommendations within emphasis areas without a formal closure of trails to specific users unless conditions dictate.

All singletrack trails remain closed to bikers and equestrians during the late fall, winter and early spring to prevent excessive trail damage. As re-routes and new trail segments are completed, evaluate season of use with the potential for longer open season.

Continue to provide vehicle access to the Shared Use Trail System by keeping access roads in a serviceable condition.

Visitor Services and Information: Improve consistency and appearance of visitor information including signage and kiosks. Develop one interpretive station within the main recreation corridor.

Install and maintain new, consistent visitor information at developed campgrounds that clearly articulates rules and regulations. Develop and install appropriate wayfinding signage for campgrounds and improved sites. As sites are decommissioned, remove and update signage as appropriate.

Maintain patrols during high use season (typically late May to late September). Focus patrols on primitive campgrounds and concentrated day use locations. Place greater emphasis on regular contact with visitors by BLM staff and volunteer hosts.

Participate in cooperative law enforcement effort between BLM, Clackamas County and the City of Molalla Police Department. Enforcement efforts focus on overnight camping infractions, underage drinking and vehicle infractions.

Participate in special events, bi-annual river clean-ups and Dumpstoppers program (as funding allows).

Produce a water trail guide for the Molalla River that provides whitewater boating information such as put-in and take-out locations, river segment characterization, river flows and safety guidelines.

2.3.3 Alternative C: Centralized Camping Emphasis

Recreation Niche Statement: The Molalla River-Table Rock recreation area provides a mix of developed camping and dispersed day use opportunities along a forested river corridor. Easy river access and improved camping draw residents from nearby urban centers.

Intent: Focus resources on providing a high quality overnight visitor experience while minimizing resource impacts. Cater to a demand for improved overnight camping and river-based day use. Centralize visitor use to prevent and mitigate impacts to sensitive riparian resources. Shift the make-up of visitors to those seeking more managed and developed settings and promote its use to new visitors.

Options for a wide range of activities including swimming, camping, fishing, non-motorized trail use and boating.

Overnight Use: Camping limited to single developed campground with 24 to 36 units. Locate adjacent to Pine Creek Bridge, on the west side of the river, in current location of gravel stockpile. The majority of units facilitate drive-in access for passenger cars and small RV's (30' and under) while others provide walk-in access to tent camping. This alternative seeks to address identified issues and concerns by broadly changing the type of overnight use within the SRMA.

Estimated total capacity (assuming 2.5 vehicles per site, 2.5 individuals per vehicle): *150 to 225 overnight users*

Amenities provided include:

- Volunteer host site
- Designated and defined parking for each site
- Overflow parking
- Potable water
- Metal fire ring
- Information and registration board
- Trash service
- Improved trails and river access
- Defined site with tent pad
- Vault restrooms
- Picnic tables
- BBQ grills

Volunteer camp host site acts as central information and registration location. Hosts have communication capability (via radio) and act as direct link to law enforcement and BLM staff in emergency situations.

Users are charged an Expanded Amenity Fee (in the range of \$10 to \$16 per night). Sites are filled on a first-come, first-served basis. As conditions dictate, a reservation system would be considered. Rules including length of stay, quiet hours and group size are developed and clearly communicated by camp hosts through signage and personal interactions with BLM staff and volunteers patrolling the site.

Day Use and River Access: Minor improvement to several existing popular day use sites. A developed river access point would be located adjacent to developed campground, but would not provide picnic facilities. Some river access sites would be improved or closed and rehabilitated as conditions dictate.

Looney's Gate minimally developed as a day use/river access location, including 8 to 10 developed picnic units. Amenities include:

- Improved and defined parking
- Trash service
- Information kiosks

- Vault restroom
- Picnic tables
- Improved and hardened trails for river access

Trails and Trailhead Access: Continue regular maintenance of 24.6 mile trail system utilizing youth crew and volunteer labor. No emphasis areas for different user groups are created.

Construct a 1 to 2 mile riverside trail adjacent to central campground.

Complete minor improvements at Hardy Creek Trailhead to improve trailer capacity and facilitate equestrian use. In conjunction with day use development at Looney's Gate, provide defined parking for small (non-trailer) vehicles. Identify Looney's Gate/Sandquist trailhead as the primary access point for non-equestrian trail users.

Armor and re-route short segments of the trail system to accommodate equestrian use. This may include tread modifications (gravelling, etc) and re-routing to decrease trail grade. No additional trails would be constructed in the Shared Use Trail System.

Close Amanda's trailhead due to inadequate capacity and low rates of use.

Visitor Services and Information: Maintain and replace existing information and wayfinding signage. Visitor information focuses on articulating rules and regulations and preventing resource degradation. No interpretive materials are presented.

In addition to signage outlined in alternative A, install and maintain new visitor information at developed campground that clearly articulates rules and regulations. Develop and install appropriate wayfinding signage for campground and improved sites.

As sites are decommissioned, remove and update signage as appropriate.

Maintain patrols during high use season (typically late May to late September). Focus patrols on developed campground and concentrated day use locations. Place greater emphasis on regular contact with visitors by BLM staff and volunteer hosts.

A volunteer host site would be developed at the Pine Creek Bridge campground ("Camp Host") and one would be maintained at Molalla Maintenance Shop ("Corridor Host").

Participate in cooperative law enforcement effort between BLM, Clackamas County and the City of Molalla Police Department. Enforcement efforts focus on overnight camping infractions, underage drinking and vehicle infractions.

Continued participation in special events, bi-annual river clean-ups and Dumpstoppers program (as funding allows).

2.3.4 Alternative D: Day Use Recreation Emphasis

Recreation Niche Statement: The Molalla River-Table Rock recreation area offers high quality opportunities for day use-only river access, non-motorized trail use and chances to learn about western Cascades natural history. Defined, developed day use points and targeted interpretive information provide a high quality day trip opportunity.

Intent: Provide for a quality visitor experience while restoring the area's ecological resources. Offer enhanced opportunities to view the scenery and improve one's understanding of the natural environment in a safe, structured setting. Eliminate overnight use to prevent impacts to sensitive riparian resources. Shift the make-up of visitors to those seeking developed locations and promote its use to new visitors. Options for activities include swimming, nature study, fishing, non-motorized trail use and boating.

Overnight Use: Camping prohibited outside of Table Rock Wilderness. Existing campsites would be fully closed or utilized for day use only. Sites not utilized for day use purposes would be aggressively blocked to public entry and rehabilitated. Overnight opportunities elsewhere in the region (including Feyrer Park, the Clackamas and Sandy Rivers, Santiam State Forest) provided by the BLM and other agencies would accommodate existing overnight users.

Day Use and River Access: Up to four developed day use areas constructed within the main recreational corridor at Looney's Gate, Ivor's Wayside, a large pullout south of the current Osprey Campsite and the east side of Pine Creek bridge. Visitor use and river access would be concentrated at these locations, while problematic sites would be aggressively rehabilitated. Each site would provide between 6 and 10 developed picnic sites. A Standard Amenity Fee would be charged at developed sites.

Looney's Gate and Ivor's Wayside would serve as the focal points for use of the SRMA. Amenities would include:

- Improved and defined parking
- Trash service
- Information kiosks (see below)
- Vault restrooms
- Picnic tables and defined picnic sites
- Improved and hardened trails for river access
- BBQ Grills
- Regular administrative presence

Day use areas beyond Turner Bridge would stay in an undeveloped state, designed to provide lower levels of visitor interaction.

Enhance the current location of Old Bridge campsite to provide improved river access for whitewater boaters. Improvements include defined parking and visitor information.

Trails and Trailhead Access: Continue regular maintenance of 24.6 mile trail system utilizing youth crew and volunteer labor. Correct unsustainable portions of the trail system through re-routing and closure of social trails. Complete gravelling of Fern Creek Trail to allow for year-round equestrian use.

Improve and adequately sign Quarry trailhead and develop a 2 to 3 mile riverside trail between Turner Bridge and Gawley Creek. Evaluate potential to open BLM gate and utilize former quarry located in T7S R3E, section 7 as a trailhead.

Close Amanda's and Americorps trailheads due to inadequate capacity and low rates of use. Enhance Looney's Gate Recreation Site as the primary trailhead for north end trails. Improve and expand capacity at Hardy Creek trailhead.

As campsites are closed, evaluate potential for riverside trail between Looney's Gate Recreation Site, developed day use location south of Osprey and Hardy Creek trailhead to provide access to the mainstem Molalla River. Trail should have improved tread and be available for all-weather use.

Visitor Services and Information: To aid visitors, a "Visitor portal" would be constructed at Looney's Gate Recreation Site. Signage would advertise this location as the primary location for all visitor information. The 'Visitor Portal' would offer:

- An introduction to the recreation area and its opportunities
- Posted maps of the river corridor and trail system
- Brochures for the river corridor and trail system
- An introduction to the area's natural and human history
- Activity recommendations and considerations
- Posting of relevant rules and regulations

Opportunities would be identified to work with local retailers and vendors to distribute information about the recreation area including brochures, maps and other handouts. Seek out local, county and regional authorities to adequately provide wayfinding signage to the recreation area from major roads and thoroughfares (Highways 211 and 213, etc). Develop and install appropriate wayfinding signage for developed recreation sites within the SRMA.

Interpretive materials including interpretive panels and brochures would be developed and installed throughout the SRMA highlighting locations of scenic or scientific interest. Materials would focus on the unique geological formations of the upper Molalla watershed, historic and pre-Columbian use of the watershed and western Cascades ecological systems.

Maintain patrols during high use season (typically late May to late September). Focus patrols on developed day use locations. Place emphasis on educating visitors about available activities and opportunities as well as Leave No Trace ethics.

Participate in cooperative law enforcement effort between BLM, Clackamas County and the City of Molalla Police Department. Enforcement efforts focus on overnight camping infractions, underage drinking and vehicle infractions.

Participate in special events, bi-annual river clean-ups and Dumpstoppers program (as funding allows).

Produce a water trail guide for the Molalla River that provides whitewater boating information such put-in and take-out locations, river segment characterization, river flows and safety guidelines.

2.4 Common to all Action Alternatives

The following management direction applies to all action alternatives (B, C and D).

Travel and Transportation Management

Complete a seasonal closure (April 1 through September 30) of Pinecrest Road to prevent resource damage, wildlife disturbance, potential for fire start and threats to public safety

Enforce OHV vehicle designations and post where necessary

Close and rehabilitate unauthorized off-road trails

Visual Resource Management

Recommend during the next land use planning process that all public domain BLM-administered land in the Molalla River visual corridor in Township 6 South, Range 2 East and Township 7 South, Range 2 East, Section 31 Willamette Meridian be classified under VRM Class II.

Recreational Mining

Require all operators of certain recreational mining equipment to obtain and carry the appropriate permits from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and Department of State Lands

Clearly post mining-related information regarding in-stream work periods, needed permits and relevant rules and regulations consistent with the area's mineral entry withdrawal under R&PP lease

Discourage operation of suction dredges in close proximity to any developed or improved sites

Monitor mining use and evaluate need for regulatory prohibition of suction dredge operation near developed recreation sites as conditions dictate

Fee Collection

All fees would be collected under authorization from and in compliance with the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) [PL 108-447]

Consistent with FLREA, provide the public and Recreation Resource Advisory Committee an opportunity to make recommendations and comments regarding proposed fees

Establishment of fee sites would be balanced by the provision of no-fee opportunities elsewhere in the planning area

Permitting of Commercial Activities

Require all commercial, competitive and vending operations to obtain a Special Recreation Permit

Issue Special Recreation Permits for a duration not to exceed 5 years

Limit permitted commercial and competitive events within the trail system to no more than 5 per year

Permit vending operations only in association with a one-time special event or for firewood distribution

Aquila Vista Environmental Education Site

Pursue no large-scale site development at Aquila Vista and continue maintenance of existing infrastructure including shelters, trails, bridges and boardwalks

Pursue opportunities to facilitate use of the site through partnerships with non-profit groups and local school districts

Emphasize the site as a natural classroom that allows for a variety of hand-on scientific and environmental curricula with minimal direct interpretation

Allow walk-in public access to the site from S. Molalla Forest Road or via the trail system without advertising it as a recreation destination

Accessibility

Where possible, make any new recreation site developments accessible to allow full participation by persons with disabilities

PROJECT DESIGN FEATURES

The following project design features apply to all action alternatives (B, C and D).

Trail Construction

- *10 percent average trail grade guideline:* Average trail grade will not exceed 10%.
- *Half rule guideline:* Trail grade or steepness will not exceed half the grade or steepness of the hillside.
- *Design appropriately placed trail out slope and grade reversals:* The planning area includes appropriately designed grade reversals to minimize trail tread erosion. Trail out slope of 5% or greater will be implemented to facilitate proper drainage.
- *Minimum Vegetation Removal:* Trail design will minimize vegetation removal through route designation. No vegetation over 12 inches in diameter will be removed as part of the trail construction process.
- *Survey and Manage:* Any project planned in stands over 80 years of age will be surveyed for Survey and Manage Species to comply with the 2001 Record of Decision without Annual Species Reviews.
- *Wildlife protection:* Project implementation may be suspended or restricted at any time if plant or animal populations that need protection are found.

- *Coarse Woody Debris:* Protect and retain coarse woody debris on the ground wherever possible. If suitable woody debris must be moved, the section of log within the trail's path will be cut and removed instead of moving the entire log.
- *Snag Retention:* Any trees or snags which are felled or otherwise knocked down would be retained on site as coarse woody debris if possible. All old-growth trees would be left standing and larger snags (above 15" diameter breast height) of all decay classes would be left standing to the greatest extent possible. Avoid cutting snags during the nesting season (March 1 to July 31).

Facility Development

- *Facility locations:* Locate facilities, where possible in previously disturbed areas. Avoid stream channels, floodplains, fish spawning sites, and areas which require a high level of vegetation removal.
- *Season of construction:* Where possible, facility construction will take place during the dry season (May through September) to avoid excess erosion and sediment inputs.
- *Preventing loss of stream shading:* Removal of streamside vegetation that provides shading and stream temperature reduction will be minimized or eliminated.
- *Appropriate drainage:* Facility and parking area design will mitigate interference with hydrologic patterns.
- *Survey and Manage:* Any project planned in stands over 80 years of age will be surveyed for Survey and Manage Species to comply with the 2001 Record of Decision without Annual Species Reviews.
- *Snag Retention:* Any trees or snags which are felled or otherwise knocked down would be retained on site as coarse woody debris, as possible. All old-growth trees would be left standing and larger snags (above 15" dbh) of all decay classes would be left standing to the greatest extent possible. Avoid cutting snags during the nesting season (March 1 to July 31).

Site Restoration

- *Natural ground cover:* Restore natural ground cover to areas closed to public entry and impacted by previous public use, with a focus on riparian habitats and improving the scenic qualities of the recreation setting.
- *Public access:* As necessary, prohibit and block public access to areas undergoing restoration treatments.
- *Cultural resource protection:* In areas with potential cultural resources, determine whether restoration activities would increase or decrease the probability of site protection compared with no action.
- *Native species:* Utilize site-appropriate native species for all restoration activities.

Cultural Resources

- *Archeological pre-disturbance survey:* Prior to any ground disturbing activity (including trail construction, facility development and site restoration) a Class III archeological field survey will be conducted to locate any cultural resources within the project area. If cultural resources are discovered, apply best management practices by relocating proposed projects to avoid disturbing the site.

2.5 Alternatives Considered but Not Analyzed in Detail

Public comments received during scoping and throughout the planning process identified the desire for a developed overnight equestrian facility within the planning area. These comments expressed the belief that if constructed, such a facility would see high rates of use and complement the opportunities available within the Molalla River Trail System.

In evaluating potential sites, BLM staff used the following criteria for such a facility and examined potential locations. It was determined that such a facility should:

- a) remain consistent with purpose and need for the Molalla River-Table Rock Recreation Area Management Plan as well as the management goals and objectives
- b) remain, to a large extent, within the footprint of previously disturbed areas
- c) accommodate large vehicles and horse trailers
- d) provide direct connectivity to the Molalla River Trail System
- e) exhibit compatibility with nearby facility development and recreation activities
- f) ensure public safety for equestrians and vehicles on the surrounding transportation network, specifically S. Molalla Forest Road, a major recreational thoroughfare and timber haul route
- g) remain cost effective for development, management and long-term maintenance

After this examination, it was determined that the planning area does not offer an adequate location for an equestrian camping facility. Locations evaluated for suitability included Pine Creek bridge vicinity, Aquila Vista Environmental Education Site, Hardy Creek Trailhead and numerous segments of the S. Molalla Forest Rd between Looney's Gate and Macbeth campsites.

None of the examined locations fit the identified criteria. In addition, excellent opportunities for equestrian camping exist elsewhere within the region. Due to these factors, an alternative analyzing a possible equestrian camp was not developed and analyzed in detail.

2.6 Comparison of Management Alternatives

Table 5: Comparison of Alternatives	
Alternative	Goal and Intent
Alternative A Continuation of Existing Management	<p>Recreation Niche Statement: The Molalla River-Table Rock recreation area provides a wide variety of dispersed, free and unstructured recreation opportunities along a forested river corridor. Easy river access and minimal facility development allow for a self-directed experience.</p> <p>Intent: Provide for a “do-it-yourself” recreation experience with management actions taken to address the most severe resource concerns. Provide little to no infrastructure development and minimize long term operations and maintenance costs. Draw visitors from the population centers and outlying rural communities</p>
Alternative B Primitive Camping Emphasis (Proposed Action)	<p>Recreation Niche Statement: The Molalla River-Table Rock recreation area provides diverse opportunities for river-based activities and minimally-developed camping along a forested river corridor. Rustic facilities and easy river access allow for a relatively primitive recreation experience close to rural communities and urban population centers.</p> <p>Intent: Provide for a high quality visitor experience while minimizing resource impacts. Minimize infrastructure development and long term operations and maintenance costs. Strategically place amenities to control visitor use and mitigate impacts to sensitive resources. Maintain one of the primary attractions to the area and preserve existing visitor base by providing opportunities for primitive, riverside camping.</p>
Alternative C Centralized Camping Emphasis	<p>Recreation Niche Statement: The Molalla River-Table Rock recreation area provides a mix of developed camping and dispersed day use opportunities along a forested river corridor. Easy river access and improved camping draw residents from nearby urban centers.</p> <p>Intent: Focus resources on providing a high quality overnight visitor experience while minimizing resource impacts. Cater to a demand for improved overnight camping and river-based day use. Centralize visitor use to prevent and mitigate impacts to sensitive riparian resources. Shift the make-up of visitors to those seeking more managed and developed settings and promote its use to new visitors.</p>
Alternative D Day Use Emphasis	<p>Recreation Niche Statement: The Molalla River-Table Rock recreation area offers high quality opportunities for safe and improved river access, non-motorized trail use and chances to learn about western Cascades natural history.</p> <p>Intent: Provide for a high quality visitor experience while restoring the area’s ecological resources. Offer enhanced opportunities to view the scenery and improve one’s understanding of the natural environment in a safe, structured setting. Eliminate overnight use to prevent impacts to sensitive riparian resources. Shift the make-up of visitors to those seeking developed locations and promote its use to new visitors.</p>

Alternative	Theme: Overnight Use	Theme: Day Use and River Access
Alternative A Continuation of Existing Management	Camping limited to sixteen (16) dispersed, designated sites located between main access roads and river. Sites have minimally defined parking areas and little to no site definition. Posted rules and regulations. Fire rings provided. Sites regularly patrolled and cleaned by volunteer hosts and BLM staff. No fee charged for overnight use.	Dispersed day use at 50+ informal pullouts along major access roads. Minimally defined parking and no site definition. Some posted rules and regulations. Three vault restrooms spread throughout recreational corridor. Management action taken to address most serious resource concerns. No fee charged for day use recreation.
Alternative B Primitive Camping Emphasis (Proposed Action)	Camping limited to three (3) small, primarily walk-in campgrounds located within the main recreational corridor with 6 to 10 sites each. Each campground has defined parking, registration, vault restroom, trash service, and improved river access. A fee for overnight use would be charged.	Majority of dispersed day use locations remain open. Those with severe resource concerns (riparian area damage, vehicle trespass, etc) closed and rehabilitated. Looney's Gate and Ivor's Wayside minimally developed as a day use/river access location to facilitate day use including defined parking, restrooms and trash service. No fees would be charged.
Alternative C Centralized Camping Emphasis	Camping limited to one centralized campground located adjacent to Pine Creek Bridge with 24 to 36 sites. Sites for tents and small RV's. Campground has defined parking, on-site host, potable water, vault restroom, trash service, and improved river access. A fee for overnight use would be charged.	Majority of dispersed day use locations remain open. Those with severe resource concerns closed and rehabilitated. Developed day use site adjacent to central campground. Looney's Gate minimally developed as a day use/river access location. Moderate improvements to Looney's Gate and Ivor's Wayside to facilitate day use including defined parking, restrooms and trash service. No fees would be charged.
Alternative D Day Use Emphasis	Camping prohibited outside of Table Rock Wilderness. Existing campsites rehabilitated and/or open to day use only.	Day use concentrated at three to four highly developed day use sites within main recreational corridor with paved, pull-through parking, restrooms, trash service and picnic sites. Existing dispersed sites with resource concerns aggressively rehabilitated. A day use fee would be charged at developed sites.

Alternative	Theme: Trails and Trailhead Access	Theme: Visitor Services and Information
Alternative A Continuation of Existing Management	Ongoing maintenance of existing 24.6 mile shared use trail system, accessed from 6 trailheads. Continue to combine paid youth crew labor with volunteer assistance to complete priority maintenance work.	Continue current level of staffing, administrative presence and visitor information. No additional interpretive information or visitor services would be provided.
Alternative B Primitive Camping Emphasis (Proposed Action)	Complete an overhaul of the Shared Use Trails System that fixes unsustainable segments. Streamline trailhead access. Re-route some existing trails and construct up to 5 miles of new trails that focus on providing user-specific opportunities in equestrian and mountain bike emphasis areas. Develop riverside trail that connect primitive campgrounds.	Improve consistency and appearance of visitor information including signage and kiosks. Develop one interpretive station within the main recreation corridor. Install and maintain new, consistent visitor information at developed campgrounds that clearly articulates rules and regulations.
Alternative C Centralized Camping Emphasis	Complete regular maintenance of existing system. Construct 1 to 2 miles riverside trail adjacent to central campground. No new trails constructed within the Molalla River Trails System.	Improve consistency and appearance of visitor information including signage and kiosks. Develop a new host location at central campground. Host acts as clearinghouse for information and a communication link via radio.
Alternative D Day Use Emphasis	Correct unsustainable portions of the Shared Use Trails System through re-routing. Developed improved riverside trail connections between day use sites. Open gate at Quarry trailhead and construct a 2 to 3 mile riverside trail to Gawley Creek.	Invest in a consistent and comprehensive visitor information program. "Visitor portal" constructed in conjunction with a developed day use area that orients visitors and provides area information, rules and regulations, brochures and maps. Interpretive materials are developed and installed throughout SRMA highlighting locations of scenic or scientific interest.

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